The Hostile Attitude of the Government of Pakistan towards Ahmadiyyat its Reasons and Background

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During the past two years or so the Government of Pakistan has encouraged the Mullahs who work for them to stimulate among the masses a feeling of hatred against the Ahmadis. They have been helped in their task by means of radio, television and the Press. The Ahmadiyya Jamaat were never allowed to reply. In spite of their best efforts, they utterly failed in their task, and no meetings of the Ahrari Mullahs in Pakistan were successful. There were very few demonstrations; no one set fire to any Ahmadiyya mosques or broke into Ahmadi houses. Only a few people, paid specifically for the task by the government, succeeded in precipitating some isolated incidents, and are continuing to do so.

In desperation the military Ruler of Pakistan, General Zia, felt compelled to associate himself openly with this so-called campaign. During a particular function at Karachi, a hired Maulvi was encouraged to ask him to clarify his belief with regard to Ahmadiyyat. Although his question was irrelevant at the time, General Zia said that in view of the importance of the question, he would reply and said: 'I regard Ahmadis as infidels (Kafirs), even worse. I will enlarge upon this if you are not satisfied.'

It was clear to everyone from this reply that the campaign for spreading hatred would have the backing not only of the President but also of the whole government. In spite of this encouragement, the people of Pakistan remained unmoved: perhaps at last they

had begun to realize that this was just another attempt to exploit them in the name of religion, as done so often in the past. The man in the street simply did not take any interest in the matter.

As time passed, Zia realised that all his efforts, combined with those of the Mullahs sponsored by the government, had not produced the desired results. Therefore, in another desperate attempt to incite the people he said: 'If the Qadianis (i.e., the Ahmadis) do not curtail their religious activities (Tabligh), the people and the government will persecute them'. This was the tone of the President's message but the people of Pakistan, having suffered under tyranny and despotism before, refused to be moved. Consequently, in spite of the support of the Press, Radio and T.V., the so-called campaign could not be converted into a positive mass movement of any conviction. In its attempt to divert political dissatisfaction into religious fanaticism and hatred, and to turn public attention away from its own failures and towards a law-abiding and small religious Jamaat, the government met with complete failure.

One of the General's aims clearly was to portray himself as the hero of this so-called campaign, and thus to win popularity amongst the people of Pakistan. Another object was to convince the Western benefactors that orthodox Islam was still the most powerful force in the politico-religious arena of Pakistan and he, as the most successful exponent of this influential force, had earned the right to stay in power. Although he failed to achieve the first objective through effective propaganda, he seemed to have succeeded in the second to a certain extent.

The government-controlled media kept on conveying the impression that the 'campaign' had assumed dangerous proportions and could explode into a national catastrophe if the demands of the Mullahs were not met. It was to prevent such an unlikely possibility that an Ordinance was promulgated, paradoxically in the name of the

most rational and tolerant of religions – Islam. This Ordinance betrays monumental ignorance and prejudice even to the casual observer.

Immediately following the promulgation of the Ordinance, all efforts were devoted to celebrate a national Thanksgiving Day which, in spite of all efforts of the Minister of Information and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and despite dispensing huge sums of money from the Treasury, proved to be a total failure. It met with the same fate as the original Campaign and was given prominent treatment only in the government-controlled news media.

To a casual observer, this drama may appear confined only to the political scene in Pakistan; but to the more experienced observer it is clearly not an isolated phenomenon. In fact, one could easily recognize in it unmistakable traces of American global policy which for the past few years has systematically been attempting to employ the concept of fundamentalist mediaeval Islam to help create dictatorial regimes in the Islamic world termed as Islamic 'democracies'. The twofold advantage of such a policy is not difficult to perceive. The concept of mediaeval Islam could provide the basis for an ideological dictatorial regime totally intolerant of all opposition, thus leaving no room for a so-called anti-Islamic ideology, such as Communism, to flourish. Such governments would, of course, be unpopular within and without, but as they would be run on the pattern of Communist totalitarian regimes, it would not be easy to oppose or oust them. Moreover, discredit will in any case only be earned by the so-called Islam which will provide the raison d'etre for such a regime. Two birds could be killed with one stone: while the image of Islam would be tarnished, the U.S.A. and her Western allies would succeed in keeping Communism at bay.

Two main Factors which contributed to the Promulgation of the Ordinance

1. Within a few years of Zia's rule, petty religious fervour had been stimulated to such an extent that the country had become completely intolerant to every thing which it regarded 'un-Islamic'. Also, the political environment in the region demanded that an Absolute Religious Dictatorship be established which alone could successfully oppose Socialistic Ideology. To convince the Western Powers of this point of view, and of the apparent success of the anti-Ahmadiyya movement, the newsmedia played a carefully designed role. The implicit message was clear: if the people and the Government of Pakistan were not prepared to tolerate even insignificant differences of doctrine with the Ahmadis, how could they permit the anti-Islamic Socialistic Ideology to take root in the country? Promulgation of the Ordinance, therefore, just before the visit of Vice-President Bush was no coincidence, but reveals a well planned conspiracy that forms an important link in this chain.

2. The Ordinance was equally directed at the general public within Pakistan. It conveyed a covert message to all the political parties in the country that in order to use force to suppress all political opposition, the government need no longer rely on any logical or rational justification. The 'Islam' that could be used to deprive Ahmadis of their fundamental human rights, could also be used to usurp the political rights of the people of Pakistan. In a country based on Islamic Ideology, no movement for the restoration of Secular Democracy could ever be tolerated. The message was clear that, even though the politicians may enjoy people's support, there was no room whatsoever in an Islamic state for its subjects unless, of course, they bowed to the dictates of Islam as interpreted, symbolised, personified and represented by Zia and his regime. This was a pre-requisite for one to live in the country as an honourable citizen sharing equal Muslim rights. Otherwise,

there would be no option but to reconcile oneself to a life of total deprivation of civic and human rights, i.e., to live as third-rate citizens. Such is the idea behind this heinous conspiracy plotted against Islam and Pakistan. But are there many who are aware of it and who care?

An Unmerited Distortion

The promulgation of the Presidential Ordinance No. XX which disregarded universally accepted Fundamental Human Rights with impunity, invited strong protests from the countries of the Free World. The far-fetched plea offered in defence of the Ordinance by Zia's government was that had the President not succumbed to the great pressure, the agitation would have reached such proportions that the lives and properties of the Ahmadis would have been in danger in spite of help from the Armed Forces. It was argued, therefore, that the Ordinance was promulgated in order to safeguard the interests of the Ahmadis themselves, rather than to harm them. This plea does not have any truth in it at all. The real facts are as follows:

1. By extending its support and patronage to the Ahraris and Deobandi Maulvis during the last two years, the government had itself tried its utmost to incite the general public in Pakistan against the Ahmadis in order to achieve their own goal. Significantly, the people failed to respond, and no 'colossal pressure' was ever built up anywhere in the country.

2. The majority of the population have reacted adversely to the Ordinance.

3. Prominent political leaders openly opposed and condemned the Ordinance. If it had enjoyed the support and approval of the

masses, how could any public figure have dared oppose the promulgation of such a 'popular' Ordinance, as such an opposition would surely be against his own political interests?

4. The very same Mullahs who were mobilised before the promulgation of the Ordinance to stir up anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments in order to divert public attention from the real political issues, were again licenced to preach wide-scale hatred and violence against Ahmadis even after the promulgation of the Ordinance. This attempt continues to the present time. Whenever some consientious administrators or police officers take any action against the miscreants and the Mullahs, they are prevented from the proper discharge of their duties by the higher echelons in the government, to whom Mullahs have direct access.

A distinct group from amongst the Mullahs, i.e., Ahrari/Deobandi clique, seem to have complete immunity from the law and are openly inciting the public to kill Ahmadis, to loot and to destroy their properties, and to demolish their mosques. Similarly, they are being continuously encouraged to press for the acceptance of even more sinister demands, such as:

a) Ahmadis be forced to wear clothes that would not only distinguish them from other Muslims but would make them appear like baboons.
b) Ahmadis should be handed over to the Mullahs to be stoned to death as heretics.
c) Ahmadis should be compelled to change their names so that they did not resemble Muslim names.
d) Ahmadiyya mosques should be altered to face a direction other than the Qibla, etc., etc.

In order to provoke public resentment, the national press is not only permitted but actively encouraged to publicise these demands widely and to publish unsubstantiated stories about Ahmadi involvement and association with the Israelis. When complaints

are lodged with higher authorities, they respond with a cynical smile and say: 'After all, there is "freedom of press" in the country, and so, how could the government interfere?'

5. Even in the face of all these provocations, Ahmadis have never been permitted to defend themselves or to clarify their stand, either by word of mouth or in writing. After the promulgation of the Ordinance, if an Ahmadi dares to counter this propaganda, he is sure to land himself in jail straight away for having committed this 'offence'. Under orders of the President, the earlier confiscation of an Ahmadiyya pamphlet entitled 'Ik Harfe Nasihana' (A word of Advice) proves the case in point.

6. By issuing direct instructions to the government-controlled media, the voice of all the public leaders who had the wisdom and courage to denounce the Ordinance, has been forcibly silenced.

7. A few days ago, while speaking at Gujranwala, Mr. Ghulam Dastgir, a member of the President's Cabinet, announced with pride and in clear terms that to claim that the President had to promulgate the Ordinance under any pressure from the public, was not true. He did so only to justify his personal urge to serve the cause of Islam, he concluded. But which Islam? Mr. Dastgir chose not to elaborate.

8. Judging from what has been stated above and a number of other examples that could easily be cited, the President's plea that he was obliged to take this action under pressure of the public opinion, is without foundation. On the contrary, had the Maulvis taken the plea that they were obliged to play this game under pressure from the government, their stance could scarcely have been rejected.

Built-in Evidence concerning the Presidential Ordinance

Every word of the Ordinance is proof that it was not promulgated to protect but to victimise an already oppressed and persecuted (Ahmadiyya) Community.

As this unjust law has been enacted in the name of Islam, it could easily be viewed as a conspiracy against Islam itself. No sane person, on perusal of the Ordinance could possibly form a favourable opinion regarding the religion in whose name it had been promulgated.

Consideration of only a few points of the Ordinance should be sufficient to disprove the theory that the object of its promulgation was to protect the minority Ahmadiyya community. It is apparent that the real object of this Black Law was to deprive an already persecuted Jamaat of all its Basic Human Rights as well as its rights of citizenship.

Inherent in The Law are Unlimited Dangers

After the introduction of this law, the life, property and honour of every Ahmadi is at the complete mercy of his opponents. Any unscrupulous opponent can, whenever he wishes, deprive any Ahmadi of his personal liberty. It will only be necessary for him to register a report with the police. For example, any of the following complaints, whether true or false, would be sufficient to send an Ahmadi behind bars:

a) An Ahmadi attempted to convert him through preaching.
b) An Ahmadi was heard calling the Azan.
c) An Ahmadi referred to himself as a 'Muslim'.
d) An Ahmadi's bearing made it apparent that he was posing to be a Muslim.

To prove a charge of this nature it would suffice to produce two witnesses. Unfortunately, under the prevailing conditions, there is no shortage of unscrupulous witnesses.

Action by The Police

In the light of the Ordinance, immediately on registration of such a report, the police have no option but to arrest the accused and to institute a case against him. In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the offences listed above are apparently considered very much graver than, for instance, theft, robbery, attempted murder, gouging of eyes, amputation of limbs, corruption, perjury, deceipt, usurpation of the assets of the poor, abduction of children, and infliction of grievous wrongs upon women. It is no wonder, therefore, that a person accused of theft, defalcation, abduction, etc., can obtain bail, but an Ahmadi who is alleged to have said the Call for Prayers (i.e., Azan), or is said to have posed as a Muslim, is not even allowed this consideration. It is inevitable, therefore, that an Ahmadi accused of any of the so-called offences under the Ordinance will remain behind bars, without recourse to bail, pending the decision of a Court, which may take many months, or even years. In fact, since the promulgation of this Ordinance, several Ahmadis, upon registration of false complaints against them, have been taken into police custody.

However, by and large, had the administration, the police and the judiciary also been devoid of human decency, dignity and conscience, thousands of false cases could easily have been registered against Ahmadis. This explains why the Mullah is now bitterly complaining to his Masters that unless the conscience of the administration, the police and the judiciary, is also crushed, the Ordinance alone will not produce the desired results.

A Distinctive Feature of the Ordinance

In the annals of history one finds many examples where, to extract the truth, helpless victims were tortured, even to death. This Ordinance however is absolutely unique in the history of persecution inasmuch as it attempts to extract falsehood through persecution. The following analysis will amply elucidate this point:

The Ordinance, from whichever angle one looks at it, attempts to force an Ahmadi to lie.

If an Ahmadi, while filling up a form prescribed by the government, describes himself as a 'non-Muslim', he would clearly be guilty of falsehood, since he has an unshakable faith in the truth of Islam. Any statement contrary to his true belief would obviously be a lie.

If he describes himself a 'Muslim', then in accordance with the Pakistani definition of Islam, and after affirming the Kalima, he would also be required to declare that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Jamaat was an imposter. Clearly, such a declaration would be directly contrary to his belief and, therefore, he would be telling a lie.

If he displays courage and truthfully states that he is an 'Ahmadi Muslim', as he believes both in the Kalima and the truth of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the Promised Messiah, he would at once make himself liable to three years' imprisonment, (which could be rigorous), and an unlimited amount of fine.

What manner of law is that which fosters falsehood and penalises truth?

EPILOGUE

Had the President been honest in his intentions, it would not have been difficult for him to find a solution to his self-made problem, i.e., to distinguish Ahmadi Muslims from the orthodox Muslims. A method could have been devised whereby Ahmadi Muslims, without being forced to tell lies, could have been afforded an opportunity to answer questions in accordance with the dictates of their conscience. The government could then have easily ascertained whether, in accordance with their own definition, the person concerned was a Muslim or a 'non-Muslim'.

Just as at present, a 'Muslim' (according to the Law and Constitution of Pakistan), after confirmation of Kalima Shahadat, is required to declare compulsorily that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community is an imposter, similarly, in a separate form, or in a part of the same form, members of the Ahmadiyya Community could easily be asked to declare their faith by confirming the Kalima Shahadat, and then to declare their belief in the truthfulness of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community. Had the government followed this course, every Ahmadi would have been happy and willing to sign such a declaration of faith without any hesitation or reservation. But the sadist regime of General Zia of Pakistan, perhaps, will not be satisfied unless an Ahmadi denounces Islam, which, of course, he never will, come what may.

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